

APPENDIX A-7

CUSTOMER & STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION SURVEY

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS ABOUT ON-SITE PROGRAM

- If the exam is a fair evaluation of those taking it, why does only 1 person in 20 take it successfully?
- Some test questions are not relevant to all areas in the state.
- Some test questions are very poorly written or hard to understand.
- Follow-up on complaints to DOL big issue – Takes way too long and little to no feedback to entity that made complaint.
- The program is a good start. However, it will take time to bring the level of design practice up to a semi-uniformly professional level. Documenting abuse is fine for the Department who already functions as regulators. How do we as designers attempt to correct/eliminate problems from other professionals & even regulators without being viewed as self-interested malcontents?
- Some counties mostly in Eastern Washington find us competition. They want to do all designs and will and do hide under ‘home owner designs.’ I have seen when they fill out the form, draw the design and have the home owner sign at the bottom that this is his or her design.
- Please provide timely responses to LHD complaints.
- It appears that the Local Health Jurisdiction does not act in accordance with the state license requirements.”
- 8 – Hard for me to answer. It should have helped. Some areas of the state don’t want any ‘designers’ working in their area.
- 11 & 12 – I only know what I read about in the Board of Registration News Letter.
- The most recent exam was too difficult – no-one passed. There is currently a shortage of available designers in our county and if two of those who are licensed here now ever retire (which they will) we will have a very real crisis – a shortage of qualified professionals.
- Being a PE I never took the Designer’s Exam. I wonder if it is too difficult based on the number of people who fail.
- The LHJ functions outside state authority in practice of regulative-administrative power.
- In order for the onsite program to make a major difference, all LHJs must uniformly adopt.
- Tougher exam (only took 45 min. to complete).

- I am aware of a designer (before got license) whose work was being reviewed by a designer who was living at the opposite end of the state. How in the world was direct supervision provided in order to attain qualifying experience?
- Quality of designs has a ways to go in general. This industry started with designs on napkins and needs to move close to PEs. However, the county's doing review also have origins in design on napkins.
- #6 & #11 – The screening and testing of designers has dependently improved the quality of septic designs. However, some still don't get it. Consumer complaints need to be investigated perhaps even more aggressively.
- The test is great for regulators but does not test the ability of a person to develop a quality design based on specific site/soil conditions. Designers (not all) do not possess the skills to accurately depict site conditions on a consistent basis. Ex. Two designs for one site from different designers often get two different designs with different topography.
- Designers do not have current guidelines (RS & G) same for engineers and many do not know where to go to get this information.
- Many designers have shown that they are very comfortable with certain areas in which they work, but when going into new areas are afraid to submit designs without first running the proposal by the county. i.e. Are the soils called correctly and does it look like it can be approved. Very few designers have ever contacted the county before beginning work to find out what the local requirements are if they differ from the WAC or RS:GS.
- One can only answer these questions if the jurisdictions where they worked have actually embraced all the framework of the licensing program.
- Overall I think the on-site designer program has been very successful. I believe some of the design drawings could stand improvement.
- The program resulted in the loss of many designers who previously only did conventional designs, making the other designers spread too thin to provide quality work. The idea is good (to require competence) but the intended consequences have been onerous.
- Certificate of Competency annual fee exorbitant.
- I feel our local health department has always known which designers and installers are qualified prior to the state taking over licensing. I feel the local jurisdictions are qualified to do their own licensing and testing for O & M and installers and pumpers,
- I answered these questions to the best of my ability. However, they appear biased. The program is only as effective as the LHJ's choose to embrace it. Many LHJ's choose not to recognize the expertise of the licensed designer and instead continue to promote their own ideas regarding design. There are no formally adopted standards for design so it's hard to say if design submittals to LHJ's have improved. LHJ employees work in only their program while designers may work in several. Their views on the quality of work being submitted will differ. As far as enforcement actions, again many LHJ's do not refer complaints against licensees to DOL and instead choose to handle the

situation at the local level. That being said, I am proud to be a licensed designer and strive to improve my chosen profession everyday.

- Why are Engineers & Designers work treated differently by local health jurisdictions? I have noticed that Health Dist. are much more harder on a designer's work and a lot less on an engineer's design that is turned in for viewing. Why is that? I heard Engineers and Designers were to be equally treated. Why is that not the case?
- In my opinion the program is/has been critical to maintaining and improving the standards of practice in our industry. I think the test should be more rigorous and enforcement actions more aggressive.
- My work takes place almost exclusively in King County. King County appears to make up rules (office policies) at will. I find that their demeanor toward may professionals in the industry to be demeaning and counterproductive. Yet these people are accountable to no one. I have complained many times to the supervisory staff about what I felt was improper interpretation of the regulations and unfair treatment of professionals and the public. My words (and letters) fall upon deaf ears. This program will doubtfully change until some aggrieved property owner wins a major lawsuit. I have suggested that King County initiate a feedback questionnaire for their 'clients' response. Instead of being proactive, they are only reactive in justifying their actions. I justify my comments and opinions based upon my 30-year record – I have never been sued over improper design or construction of a septic system. This bears no weight on how the professionals are treated in this county. My colleagues refuse to echo these sentiments for fear of reprisals. If you would like more details, I encourage your inquiry.
- I would like to see licensed designers listed on the DOL list by alpha according to business name and not by alpha of license holders last name!
- One aspect of this program has been to eliminate those practitioners who were marginally involved in the industry. I think this is a good thing.
- Question #1: The state doesn't issue practice permits anymore. Question #7: To be honest with you, the quality of the designs I review have not changed. I have a designer in the county who I have to watch like a hawk! He misses wells, existing tanks, water table, and his designs are drawn on Microsoft Point program!
- How about requesting a copy from the LHJ of each designer's work for the state to evaluate? Pacific County has about 5 designers who submit work on a routine basis. Say, a copy of a sand filter design?
- We have no designers in our jurisdiction. My responses for the statewide program are more positive than they would be for our county because we did not have very many problems with our local program before state licensing of inspectors.
- Fees need to be kept minimal & examinations need to be geographically accessible and relevant to our work in Eastern Washington.
- With respect to item #11, this county has submitted complaints to DOL. The follow-up with respect to responding to the complaints has been wholly unacceptable. We never heard anything on one of them.
- 3 & 5 – I thought the same test was given to both county reviewers and designers.

- 8 – 13 – Sleazy designers still do sleazy work. Quality designers still do quality. The county does not require their reviewers to have a Cert. of Competency and P.E.'s are still allowed to be sloppy and incomplete and still get approved. NOTHING HAS CHANGED.
- Required licensing took effect soon after I started in the industry.
- 2 – There seems to be quite a lot of people who don't have a background or working understanding of septs that have gotten licensed. These designers don't seem to have their client's interests as much importance – seems that many are making up for lack of knowledge by over-designing everything.
- 8 – Seems to be enormous amount of regulators not trusting competent designers to make judgment calls.
- 10 – Some health officials have had arrogant confidence buoyed by certification. Suddenly seem to have some kind of qualifications. This is indicative of test being too easy.
- Quality of designers same as before or worse.
- Program Managers should also be required to pass the test. Requirement supports funding of training.
- I do not believe continuing education requirements will benefit designers of the community at large.
- Generally speaking, I believe the Onsite Program is moving in the right direction. However, I think the disciplinary actions against designers who have demonstrated a lack of ethics have not been strong enough. It is one of the weakest point of our industry (ethics).
- I do fully support the continuing education requirements and hope that with time, they will help to bring the standards of quality and ethics to a higher level.
- FYI – To date, I have not seen a measurable improvement to the professionalism of the industry or the LHJ's.
- The regulations seem to be more and more restrictive. Regardless of scientific reasoning, adding more layers of bureaucracy will only increase the already increasing fees (taxes) that in turn increase housing costs to the public. If a viable OSS can fit on .25 acres with adequate reserve, why does health require .5 acre for a single lot?
- At considerable cost of effort, time and expense the on-site designer program has resulted in no apparent improvement in the quality or effectiveness in on-site services within our jurisdiction – in fact, the resultant incursion of contractors from outside this jurisdiction has created pressure in the negative direction.
- I feel local health officials do far more than the state to improve standards of practice, help improve quality of designs, and improve public health, safety and welfare – but I believe that is the way it should be. The state should help the counties so the county can help the locals because the county is far more familiar with local situations. The state training and testing of county health officials does the most good – counties can then apply it as needed. I think the on-site program has helped those who design gain confidence in local health jurisdictions knowing that they are 'up to snuff' whereas that was not a for sure thing before. I think health jurisdiction should have tougher qualifying standards because they have to know it all to enforce it.

- The program has improved our regulator staff in the review of onsite designs. Reviews are more consistent, so that consumers can be confident that they will receive a certain standard of professionalism from system designers. However, moving licensing of designers to the state level has eliminated the LHI ability to effectively require compliance. Designers have repeatedly challenged requirements that go beyond the minimum design standards of the WAC, and insist we do not have authority to require certain design elements apart from enacting prescriptive regulation. Our local board of health has refused to refer cases to Department of Licensing for investigation and possible enforcement.
- It is my firm belief that certain counties – mainly King, make their own rules (not those for design standards or codes). And do not fairly review on-site designs based on what's the spirit of the law. Their sanitarians consistently look for reasons for disapproval – disapproval that has 1) No effect on public health should the design be installed w/out any review; 2) Have not desire to serve the public – despite the true & simple fact they are public employees – not regulators. No designer or installer wants to install or have installed a system that will fail. Yet the average homeowner, no matter how much documentation is give them to read, will understand what they have, how it works and what can or cannot be done. King County (and possibly others) have no real interest in getting the approval. Remember where a house is desired to be built there are literally dozen of people employed to build the house from the concrete to the septic installer. Thus more taxes are collected and the economy is better. No on is dealing with building a hazardous situation or any threat to public health. There must be some oversight of each health department – that is the only way!
- Due to a severe decline in the number of designers it has been my observation that attention to detail has suffered and no attention or time has been devoted to improving standards of practice for design submittals. Attracting new designers and being able to offer appropriate experience is a real concern over the next few years as well.
- Across the board, the single most significant barrier to greatly improved product and service in the on-site wastewater industry in Washington today is local health jurisdiction management (Dir. Of Envir. Health and Co. Health Officers). This is shown in the attitude 'who are you to teach us anything' when neither academic preparation nor field experience has adequately equipped them to understand the industry they review.
- During the course of business I sometimes make mistakes. I am appreciative when someone points them out to me so we can all profit from a better job in the future and thereby limiting my liability also. Most other professionals including the inspectors have that same attitude and it is a pleasure to work with them. That is not always the case. If an inspector that oversees my work is sometimes in error but takes great offense if I disagree with them what do you think any designer like myself would likely do. I do very little. I make a note of it and some times document it in case I ever decide to formally complain. But that is not likely because I fear repercussions. It seems your best asset in evaluating and therefore improving the public employees are the private sector installers and designers and we are stifled. Would you trust the confidentiality of a complaint if it were submitted to a local office where everyone knows you. I fear there would be repercussions, as do others so we are much less likely to write such letters pointing out areas where improvement may be needed. How often does a designer or installer do something he disagrees with at an inspector's request because he feels his only practical choice is to please that inspector even if the inspector may be in error? If you looking to improve the program and working environment please consider my words.
- Many of the questions on the exam were subjective. It would have been extremely difficult to 'correctly' answer these questions using common conventional knowledge of onsite. It was only

when the question was observed in the context of the individual writing the question i.e. (That's right, I remember hearing 'one of the members of the committee' talking about this in times past.) was the response clearly known. Additionally I am aware of an individual that in my opinion should and would be an excellent designer. He has many years experience installing and 3 ½ years designing, yet cannot take the exam. The program does not have any provisions that allow the qualifications of good quality applicants to be reviewed outside the narrow purview of the program guidelines. Also the program makes it impossible for the public to obtain the phone numbers of any of the designers that are '**so busy**' (read that competent) that they do not need to advertise in the yellow pages. Not only has there not been any enforcement action initiated by the program against recalcitrant individuals, the unfortunate response to a disgruntled member of the public at the local level has turned into 'You need to take that issue up with the DOL, they're the ones licensing these guys'. It could be construed that the '**Program**' although well intended, is a public disservice.

- Regarding the 'demographics' on the first page, I am a licensed designer employed by a LHJ. The options available do not capture this information.
- The onsite program at DOL has only harmed the LHJ's. It has resulted in decreased revenue and increased costs. I do not believe that DOL has the legal ability to 'discipline' a certificate of competency holder so the annual fee should be a miniscule charge to print a certificate, if any at all.
- The licensing exam is a joke. It is written in a way that puts more emphasis on guidance than rules. It presumes that guidance materials have the effect of rules.
- Why is DOL involved in any of this? DOE licenses well drillers, what a novel thought. The whole law was written poorly and delegated to the wrong agency!
- Our main problems are with designers who have not worked in our county. We have always had a very good working relationship with our designers when the certification was under our jurisdiction. Our disciplinary was made more timely when we handled it under our jurisdiction. I might work having the designers registered in each county so we have the ability to remove them if we are having difficulty.
- Have seen no real improvements as the result of the designer licensing program. One concern is that the current program limits people's ability to become licensed designers. This has & will continue to cause the price of designs to increase with no relief in sight.
- Here is what I see as a fundamental problem: DOL cannot do an adequate job of having consistent standards enforced because the standards are not consistent from county to county. The DOH RS&G's that designers are supposed to design by are not requirements, only recommended standards, so each county does what they want. Some use the RS&G's and some only to a certain degree. Also, the designers guidelines for professional practice are only guidelines. While written pretty well and comprehensively, with good specific detail, it is difficult to enforce only a guideline, and the result is inconsistencies between counties.
- 11. I have no concerns about the quality of investigations, however, they have not always been very timely. I understand that there have been some staffing and administrative changes that should help this in the future. 12. The cases that have resulted in sanctions demonstrate that progressive disciplinary principles have been applied. I am waiting to see what happens with repeat performers once there is a valid complaint. 13. I would say that the application of uniform standards and practices has the potential to improve public health but as of now I believe that there is still much work to be done to establish just what those uniform practices and standards are.

- As I general comments, I remain optimistic that the designer licensing program will lead to a higher and more consistent standard among practitioners, however, in the short run I think most of the improvements that we have seen results from many less competent designers choosing to drop out rather than go through the state license. Also one problem I hear consistently from industry and regulators is that there is a severe shortage of designers in some parts of the state. The bar has been set fairly high for new folks to enter the field and so far apprenticeship type programs have been very limited.
- The exam appears to increase in difficulty each year. If only 1 of 21 qualified applicants can complete it successfully it appears to be unnecessarily difficult.
- I do not agree that local health districts should be required to pay an annual fee to the Dept. of Licensing. We do not pay car license fees.
- The exam qualifications make it effectively impossible for designers to become qualified in Central WA. It appears the concept is not conceived to serve the public but interests of civil engineers. Where I live the only people qualified to design septic systems will be engineers and farmer sanitarians.
- “DOL must start working with LHM’s to weed out poor designers. The DOL exam is too basic and is not reflective of the complexity of today’s design work and the complexity of correct OSS systems.
- Complaints about OSS designers must be handled more quickly, and with more serious consequences. This will result in a greater effect on the quality of design work in a quicker time period and thus increase public health and consumer protection.
- Consider publishing a list of ‘preferred’ designers – those who demonstrate a high degree of approved work with an annual update. Consumers would be well serviced, and the industry would have an incentive to provide higher quality work.